

March 9, 2023

Re: HB2869-2 Support

To the House Committee on Early Childhood and Human Services:

We are writing in strong support of HB2869-2. We are members of the Oregon Residential Ombudsman and Public Guardian Advisory Board (ROPGAB). We oversee and advocate on behalf of the Long Term Care Ombudsman (LTCO), Residential Facilities Ombudsman (RFO), and Oregon Public Guardian (OPG). While we are not giving this testimony as a formal board-approved statement due to the timing of this hearing with our monthly meeting, we collectively advocate for passage of HB2869-2 as concerned citizens. Together we represent decades of experience in geriatrics, palliative care, mental health care, brain injury, long term care, elder law, and as caregivers and aging Oregonians ourselves.

We are facing unprecedented times as the older adult population in Oregon will soon exceed the youth population. This shift will break our state if we do not immediately begin to address the infrastructure and workforce needs which are looming. We have already seen how a pandemic could tax our health systems, residential care systems, and caregiving workforce, to name a few. The growth of our aging population presents an opportunity for Oregon to prepare and *do things right* to secure the well-being of older adults, but also that of younger adults and children who will shoulder the care needs of those older adults who require support.

The World Health Organization launched the Age-Friendly movement in 2006 (represented in the United States by the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities). The governments of 9 states plus the U.S. Virgin Islands have already made a commitment to make their states livable for all ages. Within Oregon, some counties and cities have already made commitments (eg Multnomah County, Ashland, Salem, Springfield, etc.) But as a state, Oregon is 17 years behind and we have much work to do.

Oregon must coalesce a multi-sector stakeholder group to identify needs and then develop a working plan to address the full spectrum of changes our state must enact to ensure age-friendly communities. Every aspect of our economy and communities must be evaluated. As members of ROPGAB we know that LTCO, RFO, and OPG are prime examples of how volunteers and agency staff can work together effectively to uphold the rights, well-being, and dignity of older adults, individuals with disabilities or mental illness, or those in need of decision-making supports. But LTCO, RFO, and OPG cannot do their work without the partnership of innumerable state agencies, private sector businesses, and community programs. The issues that arise for adults who are dependent in some way touch on *everything*: family caregiver support, health care, food security, transportation, disability access, housing, long term and residential care, accessible streets and open space, internet and phone access, and workforce capacity (direct care, education, health care, mental health, social services, etc). There are too many intersecting stakeholders for us to blindly hope that just continuing status quo will work out fine. Without dedicated commitment to create a thoughtful, comprehensive, age-friendly Oregon, we will see entire sectors of our state collapse.

We urge you to pass HB2869-2 and we offer ourselves individually as experts and dedicated citizens to take part in the stakeholder group as needed or appropriate.

Regards,

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Chair, ROPGAB

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